

Water Policy Technical Advisory Group

Meeting Summary
November 14, 2002
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Attendance:

Water Policy Technical Advisory Group Members

Terry Brown, USACE – Wilmington, Brian Ramaley, Newport New, Tom Botkins, VA Manufacturers Assn., Tom Roberts (alternate), VA Manufacturers Assn., Robert Royall, VA Well Assn., Melinda Moran, Town of Clarksville, David Paylor, Commonwealth of VA, Mike Thacker, American Electric Power, Samuel Hamilton, VA Agribusiness Council, Carol Wampler, State Water Control Board, Bob Burnley, VA DEQ, Terry Reid, VA Section AWWA, Ward Staubitz, USGS, Shelton Miles, CPR, Patti Jackson, James River Assn., Julia Beales, State Board of Health, Bill Cox, VA Tech, Wilmer Stoneman, VA Farm Bureau

Discussion:

Discussion focused on the role of the state in the development of a statewide water policy and plan and the purpose and components of such a plan. The general consensus of the group was that role of the state should be to ensure water resources are adequately managed and protected and to develop a state plan that establishes guidelines and a framework for the development of regional water supply plans. Local and regional water users are responsible for developing water supply plans that fit with in the context of the state plan. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has the ultimate authority to ensure that water resources are properly managed and that the regional water supply plans are adequate.

There was also discussion that one of the purposes of the state plan should be to serve as a mechanism to facilitate state endorsement of local water supply permitting activities and to minimize conflict and promote consistency among local water supply planners. The state plan should include guidelines that encourage localities to include information regarding growth and all current and potential water needs in local water supply plans. The state plan should also allow for variation in regional geology, population, and infrastructure. The need to prioritize water supplied for human and livestock consumption and the importance of developing local water conservation plans were also discussed.

The provision of adequate funding to support data collection and analysis for statewide and local water supply and economic development planning was mentioned. One alternative is to develop partnerships among local, state, and federal government entities to enhance funding opportunities through USACE and USGS or for stakeholders to support use of economic funds for the purpose of collecting the information needed to evaluate industrial sites for development.

Options for improving the state's water resource management programs were also discussed. The following opinions were expressed. Current regulations do not distinguish between consumptive and non-consumptive water uses. In addition, the current process for designating Groundwater Management Areas (GWMAs) and Surface Water Management Areas (SWMAs) is protracted and cumbersome. Moreover these regulatory tools do not account for the complex relationship between ground and surface water supplies. The state needs to better understand statewide water demands and uses. Improvement in the water use reporting system to improve the quality of information reported and to include reuse and return information as well as withdrawal information is needed. More information is also needed to assess the safe yields of ground and surface water supplies. There are concerns about the effectiveness of our efforts in protecting minimum instream flow, the effectiveness of the VWP program in light of the grandfathering provisions, however, care should be taken to consider local interests in protecting capital investments. Some options for addressing these needs include refining existing legislation regarding GWMAs, SWMAs and Virginia Water Protection Permits

D. Paylor closed the meeting by asking DEQ to develop alternatives for what the state water supply plan should look like, and any necessary legislation for the 2003 legislative session. The next meeting will be held on December 5 from 1PM to 4PM, at DEQ's Piedmont Regional Office.